



ASLEF

PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN

JOURNAL
JUNE 2012

Olympic challenges

- at East Midland Trains
- to offer top-notch Education
- for the future of rail



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No need for loathing – we're your big society!

TRADE unions and Tories are never going to be the best of mates - but the deep-seated loathing of unions felt by Cameron, Boris and the rest of their Conservative cronies astonishes me. Their hostility is utterly out of proportion.

Cameron wants to end time off for union officials in the civil service because they dared to have a day's strike. He has begun a major attack on employment laws and tribunals to make it harder for employees to prove unfair dismissal. Aided by Liberal Democrat Vince Cable, he has promised 'the most radical reform package for decades' to make it easier for firms to 'let staff go'.

He is planning more restrictions on ballots before unions can take lawful industrial action. 'A strong case being made for change,' he says, 'not least by my colleague, the Mayor of London' - the same Bullingdon chum who wants to stop rail workers having any right to strike. And then there is what the Prime Minister calls 'the health and safety monster'.

Yet at the same time he pontificates about the 'Big Society'. Admittedly this is a pretty vague concept, but it is about groups and communities feeling 'empowered' and the having 'the freedom to influence and discuss topics that matter to them'. It is about 'social action and responsibility'.

Well, excuse me - but trade unions have been doing this for generations! We invented it! Union representatives work voluntarily for their work colleagues - and incidentally promote efficiency in businesses. Moreover, research shows that union representatives are more likely than any other group to play a part in voluntary activities in their broader communities, as councillors, magistrates or charity fund-raisers.

We don't expect much from the Tories: but at the very least working people don't deserve their instinctive and vindictive upper-class disdain. It is appalling that they attack the seven million trade unionists in the UK, many of whom work in public services like teaching and hospitals. These people deserve thanks and encouragement - not contempt.

Mick Whelan, General Secretary



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**More than
just a union**

Union fears the 'bad tempered Games'

Train drivers' union ASLEF believes Londoners have no idea how much disruption the Olympics will cause to their commutes – and is worried about angry passenger reaction when they are faced with travel chaos during the Olympics and Paralympics. 'We urge everyone to prepare themselves for massive delays,' says union general secretary Mick Whelan. 'Because it is going to happen.'

Mick points out that the capital's rail and underground network already struggles to cope with the 12 million passengers who rely on it every single day. 'There is no spare capacity now,' he says. 'Trains are already overcrowded. With the influx of millions of visitors – estimated at another three million a day – we will be at breaking point.'

The union doesn't think the public has realised the strains that London's transport

system will be under from the capital's first event on 27 July until the end of the Paralympics on 9 September.

'I worry that there will be explosions of anger when the full scale of the problems are realised,' Mick says. 'I call on the Olympic authorities to make far more effort than they have so far to explain to the travelling public how massive the disruption is likely to be.'

Mick points out that ASLEF members are doing all they can to be flexible and to add extra services over the Olympics but says, 'We all know that this will not be enough.'

'There is a perception that if you are not on the main Olympic routes, all will be well. This is not the case. There will be massive delays at other stations and interchanges as people seek to avoid the obvious areas.' He believes stations like London Bridge, Bank, Farringdon and Kings Cross could be massively congested.



'The Organising Committee can't hold its breath and cross its fingers and hope this will not happen. It will happen,' Mick says. 'We need a massive awareness campaign to prevent London 2012 being remembered as the Bad Tempered Games.'

Many thanks to the anonymous member who sent us this photograph of an unusual approach toward signage once applied at the station in Witham, Essex.



Sheer cheek' of ATOC franchise moans

ATOC (the Association of Train Operating Companies) has been moaning about delays in issuing new franchises, something that ASLEF's general secretary says is 'pretty rich coming from them'.

Mick Whelan says, 'It takes some cheek for ATOC to moan about the speed of the franchising timetable when First Group gave up the Great Western Franchise three years early - to avoid giving the government £800 million – and National Express have been shortlisted for Great Western and Essex

Thameside (C2C) after they made such a pig's ear of the East Coast franchise that it had to be taken back into public hands two years ago.

'Obviously the operators are pressing for quicker franchising because they think they aren't making enough money at the moment. That makes them very special people – because everyone else in the country think they are fleeing us!'

'They'd be tactically better off to be calling for franchises to be delayed so passengers might forget the mess

they've left in the past!'

ATOC chairman Tom Smith had called for 'less prescriptive' franchises, demanding that the government 'steps back' from the day to day running of the railways.

He says he wants the government to stop telling train companies 'what they must do in every last detail'.

'The operating companies want a free hand to use the railways to make money,' Mick says. 'Passengers want something very different – an efficient and reliable national integrated service at an affordable price. To achieve that, we need more central direction, not less.'

CompanyNews

PAY

SWT DD pay accepted – 4.75% wef October 2011

Island Line pay accepted - 4.75% wef October 2011

Arriva Trains Wales pay accepted - 4% wef July 2012

Chiltern Railway pay accepted – 3.7% wef April 2012 and also improvements in sick pay

DISPUTES

East Midlands Trains pensions dispute – strike dates announced: 12,3,8,10,15 and 17 May

DB Region Tyne & Wear 2012 Pay – Ballot for industrial action will close 21 May 2012

Grand Central Ballot for industrial action closing date 21 May 2012 re Discipline

REST DAY WORKING

FCC Rest Day working extended to 27 October 2012

South West Trains Free Day working extended to 27 April 2013

CrossCountry Rest Day working extended to 26 January 2013

DB Schenker/I Rest Day Working sanctioned until 26 May 2012

Hull Trains No Rest Day Working sanctioned beyond 28 April 2012

DRS Rest Day Working sanctioned until 26 May 2012

Freightliner Intermodal Rest Day Working sanctioned until 26 May 2012

GBRF Rest Day Working sanctioned until 27 April 2013

London Underground Olympics and Paralympic Games arrangements, final offer agreed for Service Control Staff and Operational Managers only.

Old ASLEF site faces demolition

Local people are campaigning to prevent the demolition of the station in Griffithstown in Torfaen in South Wales which is part of ASLEF's history, as the birthplace of the union on the Great Western Railway in 1880.

Developers want to flatten the station to build a housing estate but local campaigners have applied to have it Grade 2 listed to prevent its demolition.

The village was named after Henry Griffiths, the first stationmaster of Pontypool Road station.

Pension problems with Finance Act

A number of cases have come to light in London Underground where staff under the age of 50 have been refused an enhanced pension following ill-health termination, reports **Graham Dear** of the LUL Trains Functional Council.

Whilst this is always a possibility (as the pension fund is entirely separate from the company in assessing ill-health eligibility) our concern is that a clause of the 2004 Finance Act was quoted as the reason for refusal.

This stipulates that for a pension fund to grant an enhanced pension before the age of 50, you need to fulfill three criteria, namely

- you must be medically incapable of doing your job
- you must have stopped doing your job; and
- the condition must be permanent.

This is a more rigid test than is currently operated by the pension fund. A pension is often enhanced for illness because it is on-

going and in all probability is not going to improve. It is much harder to prove permanence, as it is often unclear how many illnesses will respond to treatment with any certainty.

This is not the only problem. If you were to retire before 50 on medical grounds as a train driver that is the job you would have to establish you are unable to do. However if you are refused on the grounds of permanency, then when you reach 50 you will be treated as a deferred pensioner. This means you would have to fulfill the criteria of being unable to perform any job to get an enhanced pension.

So even if you were still medically unfit to be a train driver you would not be guaranteed a pension.

It is essential that our members and reps are aware of the implications when faced with potential medical terminations because it may lend more weight to any possible option of redeployment to another job if an applicant is under the age of 50.



Southeastern face overrun prosecution

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has confirmed that it is prosecuting Southeastern under the Health and Safety at Work Act in relation to an overrun at Stonegate in November 2010. The incident was the subject of a RAIB investigation last year, and the TOC has, with the backing of the union, implemented all its recommendations.

Graham Morris, the ASLEF officer responsible for the company, says the union has worked with Southeastern to

- put in place amended sand replenishment processes and routine maintenance schedules;
- review train driving policy and the advice given to drivers about driving in conditions of low adhesion; and
- modify the trains concerned so that drivers are given information about low sand levels.

The overrun happened on 8 November 2010 when an early morning Charing Cross to Hastings train encountered poor adhesion conditions as its driver applied the brakes to stop at Stonegate station. The train was unable to stop for some 2.45 miles (4 km) beyond the station. No signals were passed at danger and the train driver contacted the signaller by radio to report the situation. It is clear that very low adhesion conditions were present at Stonegate at the time and the effects of the rail head treatment that had been carried out the previous night had largely dissipated by the time of the overrun.

Southeastern say they are 'disappointed that ORR has chosen to prosecute' as they have made changes to procedures to further reduce the possibility of this extremely rare event occurring again.



M5000 tram approaching GMEX on Manchester's Metrolink

Tram-trains for Manchester?

Metrolink operator Transport for Greater Manchester (TFGM) is considering running trams on railway lines in parts of Greater Manchester including continental-style carriages would operate on both tram tracks and existing railways. Decisions will be made over the next 12 months.

Routes being considered for tram-trains include the line between Manchester Piccadilly and Marple.

This still leaves Sheffield ahead in the tram-train race, with that city's plans to have vehicles operating on tram tracks and railway lines between Sheffield and Rotherham from 2014.

BRENDAN BARBER TO RETIRE AS TUC GENERAL SECRETARY



The TUC General Secretary, **Brendan Barber**, has announced that he intends to retire at the end of the year. A successor will be elected at the TUC Congress in September. Brendan took over from John Monks as leader of the TUC ten years ago.

District 3 remembers workers' dead

A SLEF activists and supporters gathered all over the country to commemorate Workers' Memorial Day on Saturday 28 April. This world-wide day is an opportunity to remember all those who have needlessly lost their lives through the failure of employers to provide safe workplaces. In the UK we also highlighted the current government's shambolic attitude towards health and safety.

In Manchester, members of our fraternity from Manchester, Warrington, Crewe, Chester and Holyhead proudly represented ASLEF. We were joined by many comrades from other unions including the fire-fighters FBU who brought a fire tender draped in banners. This was to demonstrate that coalition cuts mean there are not enough staff to use the equipment – something that could well cost lives.

Speakers at the Manchester event included MP Tony Lloyd, families of victims of workplace deaths and trade unionists including ASLEF District Organiser Colin Smith who highlighted proposed cuts in the rail industry that could impact on safety.

Singer / songwriter Clare Mooney regaled the event with songs with a political theme. No Brian May perhaps – but the message was loud and clear!

Our march through the heart of the city centre to Albert Square was well covered by the press and media which should hopefully raise the profile of the cause. Happily no one from the Daily Mail was there to undermine us – although I did see someone dressed as Coco the Clown carrying a notepad! Not to seem sceptical, I'll assume the clown was part of the stag do we stumbled across!

Thanks to the Manchester Hazards Centre for their tireless campaigning, and to our friends at Thompsons for providing a meeting place where we could network with comrades from other unions after the march.

I hope events like this on Workers Memorial Day will help to remind us all of the need for stringent safety regulations and amplify our demands that safety becomes the No 1 priority for employers. ASLEF must continue to resist the Coalition as it attacks our workplace rights.

Unionised workplaces are safer workplaces and proactive Safety Representatives reduce



Photo: Richie Roberts

workplace accidents. The slogan of the day – 'Remember the dead and fight for the living' – has never been more apt or appropriate.

● **Report by Alan Moss, National Secretary, - Virgin Trains Safety Advisory Committee**

Softening up for 2013 fares

The process of 'softening up' passengers for big fare rises next year has already begun. Transport Secretary Justine Greening told a briefing for rail journalists last month that she is 'concerned to keep an eye on the affordability of fares' but said, 'There is no money tree out there that I can draw on.'

In January the minister was instrumental in bringing down regulated fares from the original government figure of inflation plus 3% to



inflation plus 1%. Asked about plans for next January she said she could not comment.

Faced with surveys showing that less than half passengers think they get

value for money, Ms Greening said, 'What passengers want is the value-for-money issue solved.'

Such profound comments really do leave you speechless!!

LUL SAFETY ISSUES

A full account of LUL Safety matters is contained within the regular ASLEF Health and Safety Updates that are circulated to staff.

One recent issue discussed was the placement of warning boards in the open sections of the Line to inform drivers if the next station was unstaffed. The union believes it has an agreement on this issues dating from 2007 but the boards have not been introduced. The union argues that they would enable a driver to decide if it is wise to leave their place of safety (the cab) should an alarm be pulled or an incident occur on their train. ASLEF raised the issue after a driver was left unconscious following an assault on the District Line last year.

London Underground insists that existing measures are sufficient and the union is now discussing the matter with the relevant branches.

The company also wants to meet the union less over SPADs at Seven Sisters because of the huge reduction in these incidents. The local reps insist that SPAD meeting had given a great deal of input to the sighting of line-side signage for the new ATO system and that there was more work to come, especially if plans to make drivers manually operate trains at higher speeds becomes a reality.

The issue will be revisited later in the year.



As more of our history is uncovered following the move of head office to Clerkenwell, we discovered this membership card from the 1940s. We fully agree with the sentiments on the cover!

Georgia lists its railway in London

Georgian Railway, one of the world's most profitable rail operations, is to become the first quoted state-controlled railway monopoly by listing on the London Stock Exchange.

Georgian Railway will be the first traditional state railway monopoly – with an infrastructure-owning arm and freight and passenger operations – to list its shares anywhere in the world.

500 CLUB

The winner of this month's prize is J Robson (Number 48) and the prize money is £224, reports Alan Taylor of the Retired Members' Section Committee.



Whatever life throws at you ASLEF will help to protect you.

As a ASLEF member you're covered for:[†]

Free legal advice and representation on:

- Personal injury at work (including assaults)
- Personal injury away from work
- Road traffic accident injury
- Industrial disease or illness
- Criminal law representation (for work-related matters)

- Free will writing service
- 30 minutes free telephone advice for any non-work issues such as landlord disputes, neighbourhood disputes, matrimonial and consumer issues
- Employment law accessed through your ASLEF district organiser

ASLEF members and their families are covered for:[†]

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Solid pension strike at EMT

A SLEF members working for East Midlands Trains took strike action last month to protect their pensions. Strike dates were called for 1st, 3rd, 8th, 10th, 15th and 17th May.

East Midlands trains reacted to the decision to take industrial action by putting out 'information' that the union dismissed as being 'highly misleading'. The company's managing director claimed that EMT's pension proposals would 'save drivers around £500 a year' and 'would have no impact on their pension benefits'. Not so, said ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan.

'To cut pension contributions in the current climate is highly irresponsible. It is widely believed that fund's assets have dramatically

reduced since the last valuation. Also, the charitable-sounding statement that drivers would save money ignores the fact that the pension scheme is split 60/40 between the employer and the employee - so if our members are saving £500, the company is saving £750. In total that's £1,250 a year less going into the fund per active member.

'This is simply storing up trouble for the next valuation and the future of the scheme. It is disingenuous to suggest our members are getting something for nothing. The current owners of the East Midlands Trains franchise may have no responsibility over the pension fund in a few years, whereas our members face the prospect of either crippling high contribution rates or reduced benefits due to a short-term cost-cutting decision made by EMT that has left the scheme in deficit.'

The action by the union's 460 members in the company was 'overwhelmingly supportive' but as the Journal went to press there appeared to be no moves by the company to seek a resolution to the dispute.



Under the brolly, Norwich members are damp but undeterred



'The weather was cold but the atmosphere was warm at Neville Hill at four in the morning on the first day of action,' says Leeds branch secretary Pauline Cawood. 'It made me proud to see our members' 100% support for the action. That is the ASLEF way.'



Nigel Gibson of the EC joined Boston activists for a good cause on a dull morning!



Lincoln members lined up in support of the action - and their pensions



Derby's finest with President Alan Donnelly



Showing the flag at Nottingham

Union backs May Day marches

May Day is when we celebrate those working people who create our wealth and recognise the dignity of our own labour. Unlike most countries, the UK doesn't have a holiday on May Day, but slaps it onto some adjacent weekend. But that didn't stop ASLEF members taking to the streets to show our respect for working people.

This year's London march set off from Clerkenwell, just up the road from ASLEF's new head office. It is an area of great radical traditions and history, including the Peasant's Revolt of 1381, the medieval Lollards, the 19th



Some of our Scottish stalwarts made the journey to London to join in the march and rally

century Chartists and communists of the 20th, including Lenin and Stalin.



ASLEF banners held high on May Day

100 MPS CRITICISE GOVERNMENT RAIL PLANS

An Early Day motion criticising government plans for the railways and calling on the government to run our industry as a 'public service' has attracted the support of over 100 Members of Parliament. Tabled by Labour MP John McDonnell, the motion has attracted cross-party support, including that of former Lib Dem leaders Charles Kennedy and Ming Campbell. The politicians insist that the Command Paper proposals, 'ignore lessons from European railways which have generally achieved lower costs and fares through a more unified structure'.

The railway we'd like to see ...

Last year the rail unions - ASLEF, the RMT, TSSA and UNITE - commissioned the prestigious research organisation Transport for Quality of Life (TQL) to draw up a document defining in academic terms the type of railway the unions would like to see in the future. It is a document that will be of great use to us in our discussions with government and other opinion-formers.

The report has now been published, and over the coming months we will look at various parts of its findings.

This month GENERAL SECRETARY MICK WHELAN examines what our railways should be for – in the eyes of passengers, wider society and employees – and look at the reasons – real or perceived – why this is not implemented ...

WHAT SHOULD OUR RAILWAYS BE FOR?

Everyone claims to want to 'reform the railways': the McNulty Report, the government's Command Paper, the regulator – and Uncle Tom Copley no doubt has his views. But one person's 'reform' is another person's 'destroy'.

'Reform' is a meaningless phrase unless we first say what we want from our railways. If we define that, reform is the way that we achieve that end.

So what do the unions – and the travelling public – want? We argue that it is a railway that

- offers high quality service that passengers understand – with simple system-wide ticketing and affordable fares
- tackles overcrowding by expanding capacity
- helps to stimulate local economic regeneration through better services
- assists in the rebuilding of UK rail manufacturing
- expands urban rail networks to create uncongested and more people-friendly cities
- reduces carbon emissions by achieving a modal shift of freight from road to rail; and provides an attractive alternative to flying for longer journeys within the UK.
- offers services at regional and local level

that are integrated with other types of transport to form a seamless public transport system; and

- contains a strong ethos of public service, in which all staff feel they are working to create the best possible railway for the benefit of all the community.

It is difficult to find objections to this list if you care about rail travel. It is easier to do so if all you care about is profit levels or political dogma.

Sadly many of those making decisions about our railways fall into this latter category.

WHY CAN'T OUR RAILWAYS MEET THESE AIMS?

Of course, given the desire and political will, we could meet all these aims. We could reunite the railways under public control. But there are vested interests preventing this, putting forward three main arguments

- only private sector investment brings innovation, the necessary investment and efficiency
- it would cost too much to buy back the railway assets that have been sold off; and
- any action to reunify the railway under public ownership would contravene European Union law.

Let's take these in turn.

First, everyone – Parliament's Transport Select Committee, the McNulty Report and the rail experts interviewed for the TQL study – agrees that innovation is more difficult because of our complex and fragmented privatised structure. Innovation hasn't happened.

Neither has genuine 'at-risk' private investment. It has only attracted capital that the government underwrites, so they can't lose. Risky investment accounts for about 1% of the money that goes into the railway each year.

Privatisation hasn't increased efficiency. Why? You have only to consider the hugely increased numbers of administrators and managers. The cost of these 'back room' staff has increased 56% since privatisation. Fragmentation has produced duplication of functions in the different private companies – and needs new staff to deal with all the interfaces between them.

- it would cost too much to buy back the railway assets that have been sold off



A step-by-step approach would enable the railway's assets to be reacquired for the public at minimal cost – and with substantial on-going savings over time. By a 'step-by-step' approach we mean taking back franchises as they expire, or as companies fail to meet franchise conditions. Further, bringing Network Rail's debt back onto the government balance sheet would result in lower interest payments. Then we could procure new rolling stock directly – and 'fair price' regulation would bring down the cost of leasing existing stock from the rolling stock companies that now own it.

- any action to reunify the railway under public ownership would contravene European Union law.

This is simply untrue. There is no requirement under EU legislation for railway infrastructure to be in private ownership. Nor is there any bar on train services being operated by a Government-owned enterprise. Other EU countries manage to keep their railways in public ownership and recent European Court of Justice rulings suggest that this will remain the case in future.

A SYSTEM THAT DEFIES LOGIC

The arguments for maintaining the current system are simply excuses based on the misplaced and insulting belief that 'private is good, public is bad'. Yet, wrong as they are, they continue to be the core principles on which our rail network is run.

And while it continues on this basis, we will never achieve the service that the public wants, with the values that we listed at the start of this article.

- **For further information about Transport for Quality of Life and the work they have carried out for the rail unions, please visit the website www.transportforqualityoflife.com**

Call for reps to respond to H&S survey

THE union is calling on all safety reps to talk to members about their health, safety and welfare concerns and to feed them into a major TUC survey. 'This exercise is a useful tool in setting the union's agenda over the coming years,' says ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan.

The survey, managed by the Labour Research Department (LRD) is conducted every two years. Reps can respond either on-line at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/tuc-20893-f0.cfm> or by filling in hard copies which will be circulated this month. The closing date is 29 June.

LRD will tell us the major issues raised by ASLEF reps so we will have a clear idea of what needs to be prioritised. Obviously, the more reps respond to the survey, the more accurate picture we will have of our members concerns.

One thing the union stresses is that 'health' is as important as 'safety'. Safety grabs the headlines – but far more people die from diseases caused by their work every year than die in workplace accidents. But their story is rarely reported.

PAST SUCCESSES

ASLEF has had some successes in getting rail employers to act on occupational diseases and disorders – and we want to ensure that occupational ill-health remains high on our agenda.

We've led the way with train drivers who have suffered from joint and muscle pain – known as musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs) – caused by poor cab design. The work of ASLEF health and safety reps led to the creation of an MSD risk assessment (RSSB research project T940) to help identify and correct poor ergonomic design in the cab. We have also been to the

forefront of occupational ill-health issues such as stress, long hours of work, shift work, manual handling and back pain, diesel fumes, asbestos and cab temperatures.

That list grows even longer if we add welfare issues to the mix – including rest (PNB) areas, facilities for preparing and eating food and drink, hot water for washing and cleaning and the ever present need for proper toilet facilities. We have worked to improve facilities for woman drivers.

Now we want you to help us set the agenda for the future by taking the time to fill in the TUC survey. 'Let's work together for health and welfare – as well as safety,' says head office safety advisor Dave Bennett.

● **Report by Mick Holder, head office Health and Safety advisor**

Use the summer travel privileges we've got!

Many of us are making plans for the summer holidays, so this is a reminder that even as the battle goes on over equal facilities for all, there are still advantages even for non-protected staff to travel at reduced rates. We face an up-hill battle to secure the same rights for non-safeguarded staff as for former British Rail employees – and are even hearing ominous threats from Tory back-woodsmen to remove privileges altogether. Meanwhile we still have entitlements to

- 75% off national leisure fares
- 75% off season tickets for residential travel (commuting)
- One free journey every year (per country) in most European countries, and 50% off fares thereafter.

Non-safeguarded members are entitled to

- TOC Privilege cards for reduced rates on leisure travel
- Reduced Rate Season Tickets
- International Reduced Rate Cards and
- International Coupons.

TOC employees can also apply for travel facilities for their spouse / partner and resident dependent children, so that family members

can also benefit from discounts.

NOT ONLY TRAINS

TOC Privilege Cards issued to staff and their dependants are recognised on services operated by P&O Ferries (Dover-Calais and Hull-Zeebrugge/Rotterdam) and Stena Line (services to the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland). Travel as a Foot Passenger is free except for the port taxes, which must be paid in advance, and concessions are available for the conveyance of vehicles. Unlimited free travel is also granted to TOC non-Safeguarded active staff and their dependants on Windermere Lake Cruises.

EUROPEAN (FIP) ARRANGEMENTS

After one year's service, reduced rate or free rail travel is granted to TOC active non-safeguarded employees and to partners and dependent children. This is generally made available by the International Reduced Rate Card (for unlimited reduced rate travel), or by International Coupons (for limited free travel), which can be requested once a year. Upgrades



TOC Privilege Cards can also be used for sea crossings

are permitted.

Reduced rate travel is granted to all eligible family members by TOCs in Austria (OBB), Belgium (SNCB), Bosnia-Herzegovina (ZFBH/ZRS), Bulgaria (BDZ), France (SNCF), Greece (OSE), Italy (FS), Luxembourg (CFL), Netherlands (NS), Northern Ireland (NIR), Portugal (CP) and the Republic of Ireland (CIE). In other countries, employees only are entitled to travel free by TOCs in Croatia (HZ), Czech Republic (CD), Denmark (DSB), Finland (VR), Germany (DB-AG), Hungary (MAV), Macedonia (CFARYM), Montenegro (ZCG), Norway (NSB), Poland (PKP), Romania (CFR), Serbia (ZS), Slovakia (ZSR), Slovenia (SZ), Spain

(RENFE) and Switzerland (CFF-SBB and SP).

International Reduced Rate Cards are valid for two years at a time. When booking reduced rate tickets, it is advisable to apply giving 3 weeks' notice if possible.

Unfortunately, non-European and TfL Arrangements are currently for safeguarded (Active and Retired) staff only. There are no national or international facilities allowed for TOC non-safeguarded staff after leaving rail employment.

The union continues to argue for equality between safeguarded and non-safeguarded employees, but in the interim there are still some advantages to be found.

National lead in developing ASLEF Education...

The ASLEF Education project continues to grow and develop, a fact proved by the attendance of over 80 Union Learning Representatives at last month's development seminar in Warrington. 'We are an ASLEF success story,' declared Kevin Lindsay as he opened the event. 'We are helping to pass on the baton of employment and education to the next generation.'

Kevin explained that, in keeping with the organisation's ethos, the day would be spent not just in organisational matters, but also in considering two educational issues – dyslexia and retaining students on courses – in detail (see page 12).

'It's a measure of how much we have become a part of the union's activities that we have the General Secretary with us



Our education programme is an ASLEF success story' says Kevin Lindsay. Photo: Shaun Seymour

today, and most of the Executive Committee,' Kevin said. 'I am delighted to be part of this initiative.'



Mick Whelan stressed the union's commitment to the ASLEF Education project. Photo: Shaun Seymour

General Secretary Mick Whelan argued that, 'What happens in education will affect what happens to you and your families. We have to work hand in hand to invest in it, because we are investing in our future.'

He applied the same formula to the railways when he spoke about the McNulty report and the subsequent Command Paper. 'Railway profits must be reinvested in our industry, not allowed to seep out into the pocket and bank accounts of rich investors,' he declared as he condemned the 'sticking plaster solution' that the government was seeking to implement.

'On Radio 5 the other day I said there was no strategy to build a proper social railway in the McNulty report. The author, who was there with me, said, 'Some of it is!' – so even he admits that plenty of it isn't!'

Union President Alan Donnelly stressed the importance of the union's financial stability, something that gave him particular pride. 'If it were not for ASLEF's financial success, this meeting would not be happening today,' he declared. But even more he was delighted to represent an active and vibrant union where there were new faces at every meeting he attended.

District Organiser Colin Smith added his congratulations to Kevin and all those who work on the project. 'Politics and education are inseparable,' he said. 'Our future is in this room.'

And the award goes to ...!

Howard Green was nominated ASLEF's Learner of the Year at last month's Warrington seminar. It is an inspiring tale which will hopefully encourage others to consider adult learning.

Howard joined the railway as a freight guard in 1978 and stayed at Ashford as he moved through the ranks to become a driver, and ASLEF member, in 1994.

Six years later, Howard suffered a stroke. It proved to be the impetus for an interest in learning. First ULR Richard Daniels, at the request of Howard's Driver Manager, organised a basic computing skills course for him and then Howard signed up to Alison.com, a free online learning resource for workplace skills.

Howard said he used the training courses to 'reprogram his brain'. In the process he

has earned two levels of the OCR Certificate in Adult Literacy. 'But it isn't just the qualifications,' he says. 'It has also helped me to regain my self-esteem and confidence.'

'I'd say to anyone thinking of getting involved in ASLEF Education union activities, 'Go for it! You've nothing to lose and everything to gain. Education gave me another life.'



Howard Green receives his award from Mick Whelan. To Howard's left is Alan Donnelly and on the far side is the head of the ASLEF Education project, Kevin Lindsay. Photo: Shaun Seymour

The conference said a fond farewell to the former Project leader in Scotland, Jim Baxter. Jim joked that he was 'going back to train driving for a well-earned rest!' 'We owe Jim a lot for the energy and commitment he has shown over the past five years,' said Mick Whelan, a sentiment echoed by Kevin Lindsay, and endorsed by the 80 learning reps at the meeting.



Keeping people interested

It is one thing to get someone to sign a piece of paper to say they would like to begin a course – but it can be a bigger challenge to make sure they have the support to keep going until the end. That was one of the issues considered at the ASLEF Education seminar last month. It is a fact that, 'Completing - not enrolling - is what changes lives.'

ASLEF's record is impressive. Currently over 88% of our people who begin courses, finish them. But the seminar spent time considering how this was achieved, and how it could be improved.

Some people will drop off courses for predictable reasons like illness, personal issues, lack of commitment or other time constraints, but there are steps that can be taken to minimise these numbers. These include

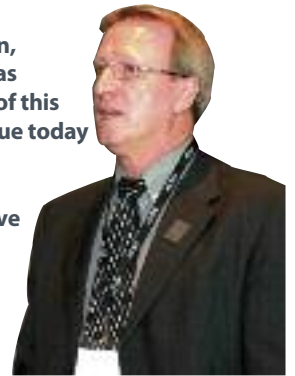
- Being utterly honest when you are setting up a course for somebody, so that they know exactly what they are letting themselves in for; and ensuring they are joining at a level that they can handle
- Getting feedback from students, which means keeping in touch by ULRs being in contact and being ready to listen constructively
- Involving the company so that they understand difficulties and will be prepared to assist in solving them
- Having the support of individuals who have done the courses before and know the difficult periods and most challenging sections. Many of the union's ULRs will have taken the courses we offer
- Liaising with colleges and lecturers who provide courses, to ensure that they have an understanding of our members and their working lives and that the course is entirely suitable for each individual
- Ensuring there are flexible timetables for courses that will fit around drivers' working commitments. This might include 'drop-in sessions' and other methods that may need to be negotiated with employers
- Involving the union, so that members feel part of a 'larger whole', something that can be helped by running courses at head office
- Considering the benefit of having applicants making some payment for a course as this may make them more committed to finishing it.

And in fairness, it was pointed out that it is not only the individual who gains from completing a course. ASLEF Education's continuing funding depends on outcomes!

John Rimmer, President of the teachers' union NASUWT, began, unusually for him, he said, by quoting a Tory! In this case it was Benjamin Disraeli who said, 'Upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends.' It was, said John, as true today as it was in 1874.'

He accused the government of 'hammering children and working families by making it more difficult to learn and improve their life chances' and congratulated ASLEF Education in its efforts to offer 'a richer chance in life'.

Right: Teachers' union leader John Rimmer praised ASLEF's learning agenda. Photo: Shaun Seymour



Dyslexia – a hidden disability

Alison Bryant of Dyslexia Action said that because you can't see the condition, it is difficult to support - yet affects one in ten of our population. In many ways it has compensations as people with dyslexia are often creative and have good interpersonal skills, like Jamie Oliver and Richard Branson.

But it can be a burden on people seeking to learn because it can affect not only reading and spelling, but short-term memory, spoken language, coordination, attention and planning.

It is a disability for which

employers need to make reasonable adjustments, and although it cannot be cured, there are strategies that can be taught to help overcome its effects.

Most of the slower reading, she said, comes from the way that people extract information. People with dyslexia lose their place if they are distracted and don't see their own mistakes, which can lead to awkward punctuation and spelling, giving the impression that they are careless.

Most of us can share seven

bits of information on a short term basis, but those suffering from the condition can only hold between two and six, so they can have difficulties remembering instructions, multi-tasking, making notes or even remembering the punch lines of jokes. Maths can also be a problem.

'It is important to be able to identify symptoms, and then see what help is available,' she said as she recommended her own organisation which has 25 help centres around the UK and a highly informative website at dyslexiaaction.org.uk

Retired doesn't mean old-fashioned!

The ASLEF Education project aims to reach out to everyone connected with the union – and that includes our most vociferous and lively section, our retired members! Last month a group took part in a pilot scheme for computer skills in the training room at ASLEF's Clerkenwell head office.

'It was a very useful day,' said RMS Secretary Tony West. 'It doesn't matter how good you think you are, technology moves so fast you need a refresher from time to time just to keep up.'

And true to form, once he'd finished the course, Tony nipped off for a refresher!



Join ASLEF and you never stop learning!

Successes as Wales is brought to book!

- a report from **Emma Ramsay**, the ASLEF Education Project Worker in Wales

Over the last twelve months ASLEF Education has enabled over 100 people in Wales to further their learning. It's something we're proud of – and want to develop more.

Many ASLEF members tell us they find on-line courses better suited for shift workers. That is why we've purchased a number of computers we will put in various locations across the network. They will be access points for learning that we call 'learning pods' and wherever possible each will be supported by a union learning rep (ULR).

We've bought the equipment and we're planning, with Arriva Trains Wales, to open 'pods' in Canton, Carmarthen, Chester and Machynlleth. This is in addition to six PCs with Microsoft applications online at the Swansea High Street learning centre, which has moved to where the old boiler room used to be in the refurbishment. A learning pod of two PCs is also being sought within First Great Western accommodation.

Equally importantly in this, our third year, we now have a strong team of Union Learning Representatives (ULR) across the network in a good mixture of grades to represent rail workers in Wales.

We hope you will have noticed our promotional learning days in Shrewsbury on 9 May and Machynlleth on 9 and 10 May, and the Newport station event on the annual 'Learning at Work Day' on 17 May. We're planning more promotional activities for the valleys over the coming months – so look out for information or contact me directly at emma.ramsay@aslef.org.uk

In the meantime, I hope you will be interested in these accounts of the learning experience from two ASLEF members in the principality



Learning knows no boundaries says 'Ted' Llewellyn as he takes up a school teaching role!

ASLEF GOES TO SCHOOL - TO TEACH TECHNOLOGY TO PARENTS

- a novel initiative explained by **Geraint Llewellyn**, the union's ULR in Swansea

Ysgol yr Ferch o'r Sger is a small Welsh-speaking infant and junior school in North Cornelly, Bridgend, South Wales. It has a website called 'Moodle' which gives every child – from nursery to Year 6 – a username and password. The idea is to enable them to use the internet to complete homework and play educational games, and for their parents/guardians to read school letters. It's a great idea set up by the local authority to save money and 'staff time'.

So why weren't people using it?

I am involved as a rugby coach at the school and talking to teachers I realised that the main reason for low usage was that some parents could not turn a computer on, and the internet was a

frightening idea for them. So I offered to set up a 'basic computer skills' class for parents, grandparents and family members for an hour a week at the school.

The school was delighted. It qualified for further equipment funding by becoming 'community based' – and within two hours of advertising the course, nine parents had signed up! Two have completed it, seven are still attending, and another four have joined. I admire them all for having the courage and dedication to take up learning as an adult.

Many thanks to Emma Ramsay and Shirley Handsley and everyone at ASLEF Education for their support and encouragement throughout this project.

LEARNING HELPS CATCH UP WITH THE KIDS!

says **John Griffiths**, an ASLEF member working for First Great Western in Swansea

I realised recently I've been left behind when it comes to computers. I have a basic understanding of them, but I kept seeing my three children (aged 16, 19 and 21) using computers to do all sorts of tasks that were way off my radar. That's why I decided to further my education through ASLEF's Learning Partnership programme on a course provided by the Workers Education Association (WEA).

I saw courses posted on the mess room notice board by the Union Learning Representative, Geraint Llewellyn, so I asked him about computer courses.

He put me in touch with Sue at WEA who helped me to find the right level of entry by initially doing a Maths and English assessment and then by explaining the options available. We agreed on an ECDL (European Computer Driving License) course that takes you through all the Microsoft Office applications and gives you a European-wide recognised qualification.

I soon had a password to access the 'learndirect' web-site and began my on-line course either at home or from the computer-equipped classroom at Swansea High Street.

I found the course very straight-forward, with tutorials to help you every step of the way. If I was stuck, I was allocated a personal tutor I could email. As a shift worker it was helpful that there are no time limits to completing the course.

I'm also the General Secretary of my local village football team, Cefn Cribwr Boys and Girls Club, so the course has been invaluable for me as Club Secretary – as well as giving me the opportunity to at least try and catch the kids up. It's been invaluable!

Right: A dynamic learning duo: John Griffiths and 'Ted' Llewellyn



At work or not, Helen keeps those wheels turning ...!

Three years ago a friend persuaded Bedford driver Helen Biggs to have a go on a BMX bike. The weekend after we met she came second in the fifth round of the British BMX Series. That really is motoring. Or, more precisely, I suppose, it's cycling ...

MEETING Helen Biggs is like bumping into a massive dose of merry energy. She's a friendly, down-to-earth welcoming young woman who defines northern warmth. She's pleased with life.

Helen's originally from Warrington, but moved down south when she was 18. 'I was in love!' she says. 'Wouldn't you know it!'

While she was staying in Mill Hill in north London she saw a job advertised on the internet which led to her starting work on the platform at St Albans. At the end of 2006 she transferred to Cricklewood and for the past three years she's been a qualified driver based at the Bedford depot.

'I will have been on the railway ten years next year and I'm only 27. I don't feel old enough to have been anywhere 10 years yet!' she says. She's certainly become a fixture at Bedford, having married Mark, a shunter at the depot, last October.

'I was almost a shunter driver myself,' she says. 'They sent us for psychometric tests to become shunter drivers instead of ground shunters at Cricklewood and these were the same tests they gave for mainline driving. Then they did away with the idea of shunter drivers - so I was given an application form to

try for mainline driving as I'd passed the tests.'

She chuckles as she recalls that a few of them drove from the Cricklewood depot together for the testing. 'We were all so young, they must have thought it was a youth club outing! They fetched us crisps and sandwiches without crusts!'

Four years later she works the core Thameslink routes from Bedford to Brighton, Sutton and Wimbledon. 'Oh the joys of the junior links!' she laughs. 'But I like it. Sometimes the number of stops drives you potty. A few weeks ago I counted 503 station stops in four days - but I actually prefer the stop-go links. The time doesn't go as quickly on the Brighton line when you can have 15 or 20 minutes of nothing.'

She smiles and says, 'I never had a huge ambition to become a train driver - but I wouldn't change it for anything now. I love what I do for a living.'

We're talking in the mess-room and there is the traditional banter going on all around us. One driver calls over, 'When she was on the platform she used to beat up the drivers!' Helen is indignant. 'What! I used to give them sweets,' she says. 'I hoped they'd look after me one day. They do now.'

'Only because we have no choice ...!'

ON HER BIKE!

Helen and Mark live in Kettering now, which she says is quite handy for both her BMX riding and for getting up to visit her family in Warrington. So how did the BMX thing start?

'I've always liked riding bikes and then my friend Rebecca persuaded me to give BMX a go. Mark loves mountain bikes but he can't stand BMX.

'What's the difference? Well, the wheels on BMX are only 20 or 24 inches and there's nothing much to the bikes - just the frame and the wheels. You race about 3-400 meters over jumps and other obstacles. It's all pretty physical. I've seen bikes snap in two. Mountain bikes have suspension and you ride them over rough land.'

She explains that it isn't 'that freestyle stuff' with kids doing arty tricks on skate parks. BMX



Out of the cab and onto the bike: Sunny Helen at her Bedford depot

racers start with eight competitors lined up at a gate at the top of a five metre hill. There are lights and audio warnings before the start-gate drops and the trick is to get over the jumps, around the corners and through the straights before anyone else.

So Helen entered her first race. 'I came second, and got a trophy,' she says. 'I was hooked!'

But she could hardly have anticipated the progress she has made over the past three years. She ended her first year of national competitions in fifth place; she now rides for the Urban Crusader team; she has one of the sport's top coaches - Mark Seaman from Groove Academy - and by the time this Journal is printed, she will have taken part in her first international race - the BMX world championship in Birmingham.

'Next year's world championships are in New Zealand. I'd love to qualify for that!'

ANOTHER SOCIAL CLUB!

Helen says BMX is 'as sociable as working on the railways! She's made stacks of friends through the sport and says that while they are rivals for a couple minutes during a race, that all ends at the finish line. 'We buy and sell bikes and parts, and really enjoy meeting up.'

Mind you, there is one aspect of BMX that she's not quite so keen on.

'A lot of the riders camp when we go to meetings,' she says. 'In all kinds of weather. Mad as a box of frogs. When you are giving



**The adrenaline flows when you're flying!
Photo: rhodopsin photography**

everything, you need to be able to sleep and shower. Well, I do! Respect to the campers - but it's not for me! It looks like a festival with all the tents, camper vans and caravans.

'There is a nice sociable atmosphere and I stroll round the campsites for a chat. But the one time I camped - in Dagenham - was enough for me!'

So is BMX racing as frightening as it looks? 'I haven't fallen for a couple of years - and I am a bit of an adrenaline junkie,' she admits. 'My non-BMX friends say I must be slightly soft in the head! You do need all the protective gear, like a neck-brace, goggle, full-face helmet and pads for your elbows and knees. So I look a bit like a storm trooper!'

'But there's nothing like coming off a five-metre start hill and being elbow to elbow with someone, tense and waiting to go. All you have in your mind is getting to that finish line before anyone else. Once it's over, it's all hugs and congratulation. But during the race you're utterly focussed.'

It all takes a lot of her time, not to mention her annual leave. 'I do some serious training four or five days a week, with weights as well as sprints and timed runs on the bike. I do less the week before a race to keep my legs fresh. With the 'motos' (qualifying rounds) and semi's before a final, you can be doing six races a day.'

SPINNING ALL OVER

BMX racing is a growing sport with tracks all over the country from Bedlington in Northumberland, Portreath in Cornwall and Glasgow in Scotland to Hersden in Kent. Helen has raced in national events this year in Manchester, Birmingham, Braintree, Peterborough, Derby and Cheddar. The only indoor track is Manchester's £24 million facility with its 1,500 spectator capacity and its PA system that refers to her as 'Choo Choo Biggs!'

A regular among those spectators is Helen's dad. 'He's super-proud!' she says. 'My mum just thinks it's peculiar. She gives a little smile and says, 'That's nice!'



Helen at the front - racing at the indoor Manchester track. Photo: rhodopsin photography



CLOCKWISE: The interior of the Manchester BMX track, the only indoor one in the country. Not a bad haul for Helen, given she only took up the sport three years ago. Bikes at Bedford station. Helen's dreams come true!

Helen is very enthusiastic about her sport. 'I'd recommend it to anyone. It's not too expensive. My bike cost around £400 - before I started 'blinging it up' as Mark calls it, and most tracks you can just roll up and ride. It's good exercise and it's sociable.'

Like all the drivers at the depot we wish her luck in her first international race later this month. We'll let you know how Helen got on in the next issue ...



A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

Historians tell us how news of the Titanic disaster stunned people around the world. It clearly moved ASLEF members to record how they felt at their union branch meetings in the June 1912 edition of the Journal. And readers were also warned about dangers inherent in the cinema ...!

Burton-on-Trent Branch - A vote of condolence and sympathy with relatives and friends of the deceased who went down in the great liner, the Titanic, was passed, while the Board of Trade was criticised for failing to compel the owners of these ships to provide sufficient boats and other life-saving appliances.

Nine Elms Branch - The chairman opened the meeting by calling for a vote of condolence with the relatives of the brave men and women lost in the lamentable disaster to the Titanic. This was accorded by all

standing bareheaded in respectful silence. Bangor Branch - The chairman, at the outset, pathetically referred to the great White Star liner Titanic, and moved a vote of condolence with the relatives of those that perished, which was carried in silence.

CINEMAS - DENS OF INIQUITY?

'Nota Bene' had this warning about the advantages and disadvantages of the Cinematograph ...

'A cinematograph for purely educational and scientific purposes has recently been installed

at the Institute of Hygiene. It will be used in connection with domestic science and medicine, and objects of common danger to health, such as insect pests.

'On the other hand, the strictly pictorial cinematograph is stated by a Hull magistrate to be responsible for an unusual increase in juvenile crime, several schoolboys having lately been guilty of housebreaking. Four of them had broken into 17 houses in the Hull district, and had stolen £37 worth of goods during two months, much of the money obtained by these means having been, it was alleged, spent at the picture shows and theatres. The boys pleaded guilty and were duly sentenced.'

○ Extracts selected and edited by Mick Holder



**YOU'D THINK THE GOVERNMENT
HAD BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN
ATTACK YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK.**



IT'S NOT AS IF THIS COUNTRY was exactly short of issues. We face urgent problems like a stricken economy, record youth unemployment and the gap between the super-rich and everyone else. Yet the government is devoting precious time and energy to attack, of all things, rights at work.

TUC

A stealthy series of changes that add up to a wholesale assault.

Already on extra year to wait for protection against unfair sackings, with reduced maternity rights and more dangerous workplaces in the pipeline.

These sly attacks have nothing to do with getting the economy moving. They

come from the same people who fought the minimum wage and paid holidays.

By slicing away a bit at a time, they hope no-one will notice. But we have, and you should too.

Visit the website to find out more, and tell ministers they've been rumbled.

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FLOYD 'BARE BONES' COX – TRAFFORD PARK'S CANADIAN

I am sorry to report the passing of Floyd 'Bare Bones' Cox at the age of 88. His funeral took place on 24 February.

Floyd was born in Canada in 1923 and he began work on the UK railway at 19F Trafford Park in June 1948. How many Canadians, I wonder, fired, then drove (4) 5553 5X Jubilee 'Canada' on Manchester Central to St Pancras? One of his former rail colleagues who attended the funeral recalled

running away on the Midland in the 60s with a Stanier Black 8, the fault being attributed to Floyd's guard miscalculating the tonnage!

Floyd enlisted in the Canadian army in 1942, qualifying as an anti-tank gunner the following year. He volunteered to serve in the Second World War where he rose to the rank of Sergeant and was awarded the 1939-45, Italy and Germany Stars. He and his wife Dorothy initially moved to

Canada but then returned to Manchester.

Floyd's nickname was coined by Norman Lawson, the unofficial Trafford Park poet who wrote, 'When he passed for driving, long and loud were his moans/ That's how he got his nickname, no mileage, just bare bones.'

Our condolences go to this fine man's family and friends.

Mel Thorley, Reporter, Trafford Park



Floyd in his army days

LUCY WIEMERS A YOUNG LIFE LOST



Memories of little Lucy will always be bright and beautiful

It is with great sadness that I have to announce the untimely death of Lucy Wiemers.

Lucy was the eight-year-old daughter of Swansea driver Andrew Wiemers.

Many of you will remember the article in last September's Journal article about Lucy's brave fight against systemic mastocytosis - a rare form of leukaemia.

Andrew and the family were overwhelmed by the flood of support they received. Donations flooded in from branches the length and breadth of the country.

Full-time union officer Stan Moran called on the 2010 AAD in Swansea AAD to 'dig deep', and the conference did us proud!

All this enabled Lucy to enjoy some memorable outings and occasions.

She astounded us all by battling for over two years, sadly to pass away in the early hours of Wednesday 18 April

Our thoughts are with Andrew, Nicola and the family at this very sad time

Brian Jones, Secretary, Swansea High Street branch



Banbury drivers (with Bob's brother Edward at the centre of the picture) pay their respects at the funeral

BOB COURTS A SAD LOSS FOR BANBURY

It is with great sadness that I am writing to inform you that Banbury Driver Robert (Bob) Courts passed away suddenly on the 24 March at the age of 57. Our thoughts are with his family at this difficult time.

Bob was a talented musician who joined the railway family later in life. He started work as a newly qualified driver at Banbury shortly after the depot reopened in 2003. Quickly earning the respect of his workmates, he became our 'Pensions Champion', a role he carried out with great distinction before going on to attend the 2010 AAD. He would regularly attend branch meetings where his insight and opinions were always valued.

Bob's funeral was held in Banbury on 16 April. A magnificent effort from our comrades at Chiltern Railways allowed almost the whole of our depot to turn out to pay our respects. We were made to feel most welcome by Bob's family, and I hope that we were able to help to give him the send-off he truly deserved. Farewell, Bob and rest in peace.

Andrew Kelly, Secretary, Banbury Branch

DAVE BROWN A POPULAR DRIVER

It's with sadness that I have to inform members of the sad death of one of West Brompton's best-loved retired members, Dave Brown.

Dave joined ASLEF as a Guard at Parsons Green on the District Line back in 1974. He soon became a Driver, rising through the rank to Manager before his retirement in 2005.

Many of us will remember Dave and we offer our sincere condolences to his wife Teresa and the rest of the family.

Several branch members attended Dave's funeral on 14 February where a full turn-out included members of his family, his circle of friends and London Underground staff.

Greg Tasker, Secretary, West Brompton branch

TARIQ 'TAZ' GOSS GONE FISHING



It's with great sadness that we report on the death of our friend and colleague Tariq 'Taz' Goss who was 44. The sudden and tragic loss was felt across the company and especially at Selhurst where he'd been a driver for the past six years.

Before coming to the footplate Tariq worked at Redhill in 1989 as a member of the platform team for a few years before leaving to go travelling. In 2002 he returned to the railway and joined the team at Purley for a year and a half. He was a private man and was 'one of the lads' who loved fishing and had a great entrepreneurial mind for inventing stuff.

Andrew Cook, Secretary, Selhurst branch

General Secretary at Barrow 'Open Forum'

It was a great pleasure to welcome our General Secretary Mick Whelan, full-time Officer Colin Smith and the Rt. Hon John Woodcock, MP to Barrow-in-Furness to a union 'open forum' on Sunday 28 March – especially at a time of growing rumours and speculation about the possible effects of refranchising and the McNulty report on depots in the North-West. Members of all recognised rail unions were invited to the forum as the rail proposals will affect all grades.

Before the forum proper, Mick presented long service awards to five Barrow members – Robin Nott (40 years in ASLEF), Alan Woodfine (20 years), Mal Stevens (20 years)

This was an open forum and members of all recognised trades unions were invited to attend, as this is an issue with the potential to affect members in all grades.

The meeting opened with presentations by Mick to some of our long serving members, and in particular Robin Nott on his 40 years in ASLEF. Others receiving long service badges were Alan Woodfine (20 years) Mal Stevens (20 years) Terence Muldoon-Smith (20 years) and Steve Derbyshire (10 years).

Our local MP John Woodcock was in an ideal position to open the forum as he is a



The Barrow boys! From left to right Alan Woodfine, John Woodcock MP, Steve Derbyshire, Malcolm Stevens (Branch Secretary), Mick Whelan (General Secretary), Terry Muldoon-Smith, Robin Nott and Colin Smith (District Organiser)

member of Labour's Shadow transport team and has set up a local campaign to protect through services from Barrow to Manchester Airport. It's good to know we have a proactive Member of Parliament on our side during the challenging times we will be facing.

Having recently been assaulted on a train, John was also able to speak forcibly on his view that we need to retain the conductor grade.

Mick Whelan gave a fantastic speech outlining the problems facing the rail industry and how our union is preparing to combat the challenges that lie ahead in a positive way. It was good to hear that whilst we will continue to be a specialist independent union, Mick

wants to create an air of active cooperation between all rail unions.

Our full-time officer Colin Smith's rousing speech detailed the challenges ahead for all trades unionists in the North-West and after a question and answer session we had the chance to socialise with Mick and Colin.

Thanks to everyone for the excellent turnout that included members of all three unions, and ASLEF representatives from Manchester Piccadilly and Wigan – and to Mick, Colin and John for taking time out of their busy schedules to be at our meeting.

Andy Painter, Assistant Branch Secretary, Barrow

Obituaries

JOHN CHAPMAN A MAN OF PRINCIPLE

It is with deepest sadness that I have to report the sad passing of our retired brother John Chapman who died on 19 April after a short illness.

John will be sadly missed by all who knew him and especially by those of us fortunate enough to have worked with him at Clacton.

John had been an active ASLEF member for 50 years, receiving his 50-year medallion shortly before his retirement.

He will be remembered as a man of principal and a true gentleman who was always there to help with his knowledge and wisdom.

Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

Andy Gordon, Company Council Representative, Clacton, Colchester and Liverpool Street

PHIL GEEN

I had been writing about Phil Geen in my soon-to-be-published memoirs when I heard of his death last year. Phil was my Driver at Loughton during my early years as a guard before his move to Lillie Bridge. We met up again there in the 1990s after my move from Neasden (loco).

After his 1993 retirement he took up my offer to video his daughter's wedding. The previous week he rode from Luton to Loughton via the M1 and M25 on his Goldwing motorbike in half an hour! He told me later he was horrified during the return journey, entirely along narrow country lanes. I videoed that journey, having fitted cameras to my own bike.

Phil was never far from trains after his retirement. In fact he had a large layout in his attic where he was his own Controller. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Dennis ('De-Menace') Bostock, Engineers Train Operator, Retired

BOB BELLMAN A CALM CHARACTER

I'm sorry to have to report that Tonbridge branch has lost another old friend, Bob Bellman.

Bob was a very well-liked Cornishman. The overflowing Crematorium was evidence of how well-known he was, and how many friends he had.

He started as a cleaner at Laira in 1953, went to Slough for his firing job and then returned to Plymouth where he met his future wife. After they married, Bob transferred to the Southern at Hither Green. He stayed there until he came to Tonbridge where he finished his career. He had to retired through ill-health after 47 years' service

Bob was always a calming influence in the mess room. It must have been the Cornishman in him. He was always very well laid back.

Rest in peace, Bob. You will not be forgotten. Our thoughts are with your wife and family at this sad time.

Dave Weddle, Reporter, Retired Members Section, Tonbridge

CHAS WRIGHT A STALWART

It is with great sadness that I write to inform you of the death of ASLEF stalwart Chas Wright of Hereford.

Chas served his union comrades in a number of posts during his railway career, and was at different times both Secretary and Chairman of the Hereford branch.

For many years he served as a member of the Western Region Sectional Council and he was Secretary of the Birmingham District Council. He was also a long-serving member of Herford Trades Council.

Following his retirement he still found time to run our Motor and Gardening Club and was Secretary of our Retired Section.

He will be sorely missed by all his friends and colleagues.

Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

J. G. Davies, retired member

Two Reading presentations reflect a century of service

The March meeting of the Reading branch saw District Organiser Stan Moran make a couple of presentation to 50-year members. Retired member Brian Hadnam received a 50-year medal.

Secondly, a pen set and retirement certificate was given to Ken Cockell who is retiring after working on the railway for 51 years as an Engine Cleaner, Fireman and Driver - all at Reading.

Roger Greene, Secretary, Reading branch



Ken has retired after over half a century working in the same depot



Stan Moran congratulates Brian on 50 years of rail service

Excellent turn out at Cambridge

Cambridge was pleased to welcome GS Mick Whelan to its well-attended April branch meeting. Also in attendance were the EC member for District 5, Nigel Gibson, and representatives of the CrossCountry Company Council. The meeting began with a silent tribute to the memory of the late Andy Morrison.

In Mick's address, he thanked everyone for their support in his election before going onto update the branch on a number of pressing issues – including the McNulty report, the London mayor election, the importance of efficient communications with the membership and the launch of the 'Save our Railways' campaign. This was followed by a lively question and answer session.

The branch heard reports from



There was a good turn-out at Cambridge for General Secretary Mick Whelan

Dave Sullivan (XC) and Nigel Gibson (EC) before candidates for the vacant District Organiser position addressed the branch.

Mick Whelan then had the pleasure of presenting certificates to previous Branch Secretaries Andy Dawson and Andy Yates in

recognition of their great service to ASLEF. Long service badges were also presented to Drivers Dave Carey (20 year badge) and Alex Chapman (10 year badge).

On behalf of the branch I would like to extend thanks to everyone who took the time to attend - and

especially to Anita for providing a lovely buffet.

Due to the extra Bank Holiday our next meeting will be on Monday 25 June at 18:30 at The Earl of Beaconsfield.

Martin Haylett, Secretary, Cambridge Branch

Upcoming events

OLD OAK COMMON 23 JUNE:

Meet-up for ex 1972 81A era Drivers/Secondmen at Reading - pub outside the station down the main side from 12:00 on Saturday 23 June. We will discuss the 40th Anniversary trip and meet up with old colleagues. Come along see who you recognise after 40 years! All welcome. For more details contact Bob Dorkings of the Barnham Branch at rdorkings@yahoo.com

CRICKLEWOOD SUMMER REUNION 29 JUNE:

The next reunion will be on Friday 29 June. We will be meeting at Kidderminster for an 11:40 departure to Bridgnorth – and on to a trip on the Severn Valley Railway. For further information contact Grahame Nash at Bristol or Bob Hodson in Wolverhampton



General Secretary Mick Whelan went to York's April meeting to make long service awards to several branch members. Pictured are Tosh McDonald (EC), Malcolm Dixon (Branch Sec), David Nunn (Acting Chair) and GS Mick Whelan. Mick is presenting Chris Short with his 35-year ASLEF badge. Fellow award winners Dave Spooner, Kevin Eshelby, Trevor Dent, Jeremy Barrett, Geoff Morris and Neil Raistrick are looking on.



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 75-77 St John Street London, EC1M 4NN** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER** feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

CICA provisions must stay

I read with great interest the article on page eight of the April Journal on the issue that the Justice Secretary may change the law so that a driver who is traumatised after a suicide would no longer be able to claim CICA compensation. As someone who has experienced a fatal suicide I find it very difficult to understand how anyone can think that this is anything other than an assault on the person driving the train.

Following an incident of this kind most normal drivers go through the same sort of thought process, asking themselves, 'Was it my fault? Could I have braked earlier? Could I have done something to avoid it?' But we all know you can't keep on like this. You have to put it to the back of your mind and get on with the job. But it is always there.

Occasionally when I'm passing the location of my fatality, I think of that day. I tell myself not to remember the date or visualise the incident - but it is difficult. I thought I had put it to the back of my memory but when I read that article all the thoughts came rushing back. I really did remember every detail so no, it never goes away completely.

Who knows how as a driver we will react if this happens again? Or if an incident occurs that means we may not be able to carry out our job driving trains? That is why we must as a union do everything within our power to make the government see that the claim following a suicide should remain in force.

Eddie Atkinson, Driver, Skipton

Sign the boxes e-petition!

I look forward with anticipation to the outcome of Dean Anderson's e-petition on re-instating staff travel boxes for non-safeguarded staff (Letters, Journal, April). Mr Anderson is making us all aware of the discrimination between UK rail workers and European rail staff - in a country that is supposed to pride itself on equal opportunities.

There was a suggestion that the reason for non-safeguarded not being allowed to travel free in their own country (unlike on the Continent) is because our rail is privatised. So why can the Swiss rail staff - from a part-privatised railway - travel free here, and we cannot?

FLEXIBLE WORKING VICTORY - EVENTUALLY

After giving birth to my son in July 2009 I was in a privileged position to take the full year's maternity leave. When it was time to return to work at Bishops Stortford as a Driver I decided, with the help of my union reps to pursue the Flexible Working Policy to enable myself to work a two day week.

This request was declined by NXEA on various spurious grounds. Although I was offered Reduced Hours in a separate link but this would still mean a four-day week.

After a time of sickness due to the stress of working full-time and having a long commute, I returned to work with the company agreeing that I could use my outstanding leave to reduce my working week. This was obviously a short-term solution.

A 'job share' agreement was finally signed off in September 2011. All I needed to do was find another driver to share with. This would mean another driver and I sharing a line in our roster. Despite the company concerns that this would 'open the floodgates', sadly there were no other drivers in a position to take up a job share. I was faced with the prospect of being forced to return to full time working or leave the industry. Having passed out as a Driver in 1993 I

was keen to keep my job as a driver.

By now a year had passed since my first Flexible Working application was made which meant I could re-apply. Again my application was declined on similar grounds. Again, I appealed.

ASLEF advised me to involve Thompsons Solicitors to take the case to an Employment Tribunal. This went ahead and a letter was sent to the relevant manager. Following my Flexible Working appeal hearing, NXEA finally agreed to my two-day week.

I can now keep my career and see my son grow up in his early years. Hopefully when the time is right, providing the company agree, I will be able to once again fill a full-time driving position.

I would especially like to thank Nigel Gibson and Alan Edwards for all their hard work, attending meetings, putting up with my phone calls and text messages and for helping me achieve such a good result.

Thank you also to NXEA for finally agreeing to a part time position 18 months after I first applied for it. It's been a long hard slog but we got there eventually.

Miss Lesley Clark, Driver, Bishops Stortford

Remember when non-safeguarded staff retire they lose everything - even though they may have done 30 years.

I urge all non-safeguarded staff of every grade to sign the e-petition at [hppt:epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/17508](http://petitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/17508).

Richard Peterson, Retired member

Fowler cycles for charity

South West Trains driver Alan Fowler is cycling the 200 miles from London's Waterloo Station

to Brecon in South Wales to celebrate his 60th birthday - and raise money for the Cardiomyopathy Association, a charity that provides information and support to families affected by the heart condition. Alan's sister Vivienne Pollard died suddenly as a result of it two years ago, aged 61.

During the challenge, from 2 - 5 June Alan hopes to cover 50 miles a day. To support the appeal, please go to www.virginmoneygiving.com/alanfowler1 and for more information about cardiomyopathy, call the Cardiomyopathy Association on free

ANDY AT PEACE

I am sending you a picture of my son's resting place, where he is now at peace. Andy's grave is at Wheathampstead Church in Herts. On the stone we put, 'Too dearly loved to be forgotten'.

Andy's Dad



phone 0800 018 1024 or see the website

www.cardiomyopathy.org

Chris Sneddon, Wimbledon

... While Barter walks

I have the fortunate pleasure of taking part in this year's Railway Children Three Peaks challenge from 21- 23 June. I'll be walking up (and down, I hope!) the three highest mountains in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Railway Children fights for vulnerable children living alone and at risk

on the streets where they suffer abuse and exploitation. In the UK their existence is often denied, while in other countries the problem is so prevalent that it has become the accepted norm.

I hope branches and members will sponsor me and support this worthwhile charity. Please make any cheques payable to 'ASLEF Bedford Branch Clause 1'. I'll acknowledge any donations from individuals and branches. Thanks in advance.

Martin Barter, Secretary, Bedford branch

Thanks To Dick Samuels

It was a great shock to be told of the resignation of Dick Samuels, FGW Divisional Council Representative for West of England HSS drivers.

Dick has been our rep for 11 years and has done a sterling job in a position that is more difficult than most members could imagine. He has represented many drivers for a multitude of reasons, always doing so in a professional manner with the drivers' interest at heart. He was always available to the local reps when needed and will be missed.

Steve Harris, Local Rep, Plymouth

Not a standard response!

I wrote a letter to the London Evening Standard last month – which to my surprise was published! I pointed out that they had announced that driverless trains would be running on the Bakerloo line by 2021 – on the very day that the line was cut short at Piccadilly Circus because of a bulging tunnel wall at Embankment station.

And who was it that raised the alarm about this potentially lethal situation? Why – the driver, of course!!

Rodney Salter, retired member and former Chairman, Rickmansworth branch

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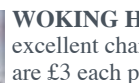
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FAVERSHAM BRANCH (077) has finally launched its 25th Anniversary ASLEF/NUM badge. They cost £10 each including P&P. A few Faversham Branch Centenary badges remain

available at £5 each including P&P. To order please contact the Branch Secretary, Steve Gurdler, 18 Hunters Way West, Chatham, Kent ME5 7HL. steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk or 07941 110473



WOKING HOMES BADGE to raise money for this excellent charity and home for retired rail staff. Badges are £3 each plus £1 for postage on any order. Please make cheques payable to Woking Homes and send cheques to Woking Homes, Oriental Road, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7BE



CITY OF LONDON BADGES, one 10-year and one depot badge. Depot badges are numbered 1-150. There are only 150 of each. Price £5 plus £1 p&p. All profits to City of London branch funds to acquire a branch banner.

Further information or orders to Colin Dawson 01689 849 543 or 22 Hutchison Road, New Addington, Croydon, Surrey CR0 0BD.

Olympic appeal – treat workers fairly!



WITH only a month to go until the London 2012 Olympics, images of Olympian and Paralympian athletes are everywhere, in adverts associated with specific brands. The list of multinational companies that have got involved is long because we not only have 'Worldwide Olympic Partners' but also London 2012 Official Olympic 'Partners', 'Supporters' and 'Providers and Suppliers'.

These sponsorship deals give Olympic partners commercial monopolies worth millions of pounds: Visa are the only credit card accepted at any Olympic venue, McDonalds is the only branded food that can be sold, and Coca Cola is the only branded drinks provider... The Olympic Park will be cleansed of any non-approved logos. How committed can McDonalds, Coca-Cola and Cadburys really be to us all living active, healthy lifestyles? Surely sporting events such as the Olympics are little more than an advertising opportunity for fast food corporations?

And while Adidas may be the Olympic partner for sportswear, other brands, such as Nike and Puma, have still succeeded in getting involved by sponsoring individual Olympic athletes. In doing this, of course, they are guaranteeing visibility of their logos in front of a global TV audience of four billion spectators!

The reality is that multinational corporations want to associate their brands with the Olympics only because they see this as an opportunity to increase their profits.



NO FAIR PLAY FOR WORKERS

The London organizing committee (LOCOG) publicly embraced the Olympic principles of social responsibility and fairplay. Unfortunately the Olympic sponsors do not adhere to such ethical principles. In fact, the main multinational corporations involved in the London Olympics have all been exposed as associated with human rights violations and

environmental damage in their operations.

G4S, the official security services provider for London 2012, operates UK prisons and immigration detention centers which have been implicated in human rights abuses. Coca-Cola bottlers are alleged by trade unionists in Colombia to use paramilitaries to attack and kill worker activists, and the company also has a history of union-busting in other countries. BT, the official communications partner of London 2012, is accused of complicity in Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people, because of partner company Bezeq's role in providing telecoms infrastructure for illegal settlements. And BP, the official sustainability partner, will of course be using conventional fuel in 99% of the Olympic vehicles, rather than any environmentally-friendly alternative.

One of the most controversial examples is the official IT partner of the 2012 Games, Atos, which has stripped thousands of sick and disabled people of disability benefits. Although their health testing regime has been declared unfit for purpose, and in spite of claims of bullying disabled people, they will be championing support for disabled athletes competing in the Paralympics.



DEBASED MEDALS

Trade unions around the world are campaigning to stop mining multinational Rio Tinto from supplying the metals for the London 2012 medals. Their campaign (www.offthepodium.org) has been developed in support of nearly 800 metal workers locked out of a Canadian smelter by Rio Tinto because they refused a plan that put new starters on insecure work arrangements with half the pay. They are also accused of being responsible for air pollution, made up of heavy metals, leading to the premature deaths of 150 US miners each year.

Research carried out by the charity War on Want shows that the people who make the



sportswear for Adidas, Nike and Puma aren't paid a living wage, and work in appalling sweatshop conditions. This is confirmed by PlayFair 2012, a UK coalition of trade unions and labour rights organisations, who are campaigning for an end to exploitation and worker rights abuses, and compliance with internationally-recognised labour standards. Their investigation into working conditions in Chinese factories producing Olympic mascots and London 2012 pin-badges found evidence of poverty pay, excessive overtime, child labour and dismissal of employees belonging to a trade union.

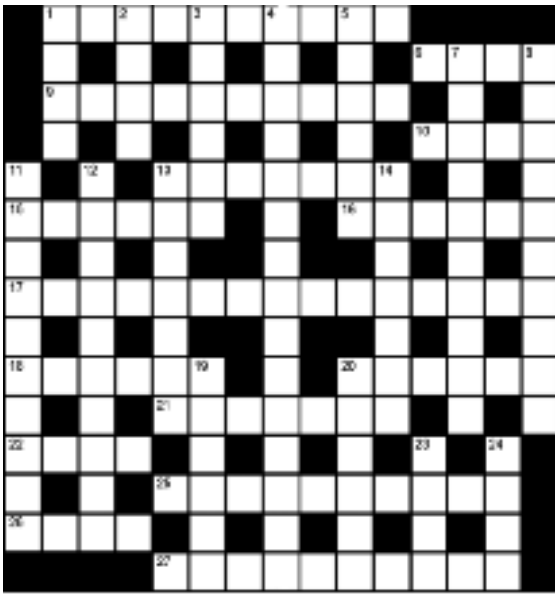
The list goes on.

In denouncing the unethical practices of the official sponsors of London 2012, ASLEF is proud to add our voice to those of unions and others worldwide in protest against the commercialisation of the Olympics and in the appeal for better standards for workers in the global supply chain. By putting the spotlight on the unethical practices of these companies and exposing them at a time when they seek to promote themselves to the world, there is hope of compelling them to meet higher standards in the future.

Report by Katy Proctor



Prize Crossword No. 74 set by Zebedee



Solution to Crossword No 73 which appeared in the May 2012 edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **D. Haller** from **Swindon**

Across: 7 Cabaret, 8 Canopus, 10 Babysitter, 11 Nero, 12 Turgenev, 14 Tildes, 15 Bette Midler, 19 Cassia, 20 Retrench, 22 Help, 23 Oliver Reed, 25 Follies, 26 'Caligua'.
Down: 1 Macaque, 2 Baby, 3 Benign, 4 Narrated, 5 John Cleese, 6 Quartet, 9 Steve Martin, 13 Greasy pole, 16 Tea Roses, 17 Jane Doe, 18 Screw up, 21 The Fan, 24 Ruin.

Across

1. Poshest group of bakers (5,5)
 6. Member getting involved in dreadful imbroglio (4)
 9. It can produce qwerty tripe, no question! (10)
 10. They're cold in the police station (4)
 13. Dog carriage? (7)
 15. Right to make move overseas - going by ship? (6)
 16. Fish nearly all a short time in tin (6)
 17. Exaggerated accounts submitted by salesmen? (10,5)
 18. One way or the other, I'm in there struggling (6)
 20. Couch (6)
 21. Came up with an idea or plan, (7)
 22. Sort of work one cannot do alone

Down

- (4)
 25. The plain facts about the nudist colony (5,5)
 26. "You _____ M'Lord?" - late 1980s sitcom (4)
 27. Not easy to understand or use (10)
 1. "For _____ us a child is born ..." (4)
 2. Father's pawns (4)
 3. Prize artist's returned (6)
 4. Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the most notable of them (7,8)
 5. Men are employed to shift them (6)
 7. Unfinished, damaged pelt included in revenue (10)
 8. Commercial or industrial enterprises (10)

11. What regular correspondents often refer to as a 'Z' (4,6)
 12. Urban rail transportation with lower capacity and speed than the metro systems (5,5)
 13. Recognised (7)
 14. Afraid the nuts weren't tightened? (7)
 19. Stay to keep the old lady in check (6)
 20. Get comfortable and pay the bill (6)
 23. Enjoyment at start of day for kitty (4)
 24. People in general (4)



MARKS & SPENCER

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

Name.....
 Address.....

Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 73rd ASLEF crossword in the May edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 75-77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN by the 14th of the issue month.

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